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ABSTRACT

Swedish adult education has increased significantly during the last century. A great part of this increase has evolved from work within the popular movements, particularly study circles within the workers' movement and the free church movement. Three different time periods are of interest: 1910-14, 1930-39, and 1970-79. During the two earlier periods, popular education constituted an integrated part of the movements' programs and contributed to the fulfilment of their aims. At that time an instrumental view of knowledge existed, in which knowledge was seen as a means to reach the decided goals of the movement. Popular education retained a strong connection with the workers' movement in the 1970s, but the connection with the free church movement weakened. From the beginning, the movements' libraries have been a focal point for popular education. Study circles were regarded at first primarily as library associations. During 1910-14, different types of study circles appeared. One form dominated during the 1970s--the so-called general study circles. Changes occurred during these periods in regard to the background of the participants. During the first two periods, popular education was a form of youth upbringing. Later, the activities evolved to include all age groups. The study circle continues to exist as an educational method, but its characteristics have changed considerably. (YLB)

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PEDAGOGICAL IDEAS IN POPULAR ADULT EDUCATION

A historical comparative study of the pedagogical ideas in popular adult education within the workers' movement and the free church movement in Sweden during the twentieth century

Background and aim

Swedish adult education has increased significantly during the last decades. A great part of this increase has evolved from work within the popular movements. The aim of this study is to describe and analyze educational views on popular education concerning study circles within the workers' movement and the free church movement during the 20th century.1) The basic question in the research is the following: "On what grounds is knowledge selected, and how are the methods for organised teaching and self-education developed within the movements?"

The theoretical frame of reference

In the basic theoretical frame of reference of the study various ways of defining the concept "movement" are mentioned. A movement's objective can be said to express demands for change or resistance to change in the social order. The term "popular movement" suggests that the movement was established by individual initiative without state support and in opposition to the authority of the state.

Cultural revitalization movements constitute a special kind of movement, characterized by a striving to create a more satisfactory social culture. Their aim is to re-create not only isolated parts, but the whole of the cultural system. The significance of the concept culture becomes then a lifestyle as a whole. In accordance with earlier research, the workers' movement and the free church movement are thus regarded in the study as revitalization movements.

The emergence of cultural revitalization movements denotes a separation between the dominating culture and the culture of the movement. In this separation education is of great importance. According to the revitalization movement's viewpoint, the formal education system is a part of the dominating culture. At the same time the movement's members require increased knowledge in order to carry out the programme of the movement. The movements can overcome this dilemma by demanding reforms in the educational system, by building up an educational system of their own or by a combination of these two routes. In the study the focus is on the movements' own contributions to education.

Adult educational methods can be seen as cultural patterns, which spread under the same conditions as other cultural patterns. For a method to be accepted it is, according to this way of thinking, essential for the participants to regard it as functional. The working forms must, in other words, agree with the values which exist whithin the culture of the movement.

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1) Free church = denominations independent of the official state (Lutheran) church in Sweden.

In this connection education means to organize power. The constitutive ideas of the movement also govern education, which thus becomes an integrated part of the process of cultural revitalization.

Results

In the thesis, facts about the popular education of the workers' movement and the free church movement are described for three different periods of time, 1910-14, 1930-39 and 1970-79.

According to the basic theoretical frame of reference, there is a connection between the movements' striving for renewal and the direction their popular education takes. A few essential areas are pointed to in the study concerning the movements' actions during these three periods. As a part of the struggle for freedom of religion at the beginning of the 20th century, the free church movement demands that the church be separated from the state, and that the church's control over the schools be abolished. The demands of the movements change according to the social development. During the final research period, there is a concentration upon immigrant questions, questions on the environment and educational questions.

A general observation is that the character of the demands changes. The actions are affected less and less by the difference between the dominating culture and the culture of the movement. This is connected with the establishment and institutionalization of the movements.

During the two earlier periods, popular education constitutes an integrated part of the movements' programmes and contributes to the fulfillment of their aims. At the same time, one can observe an instrumental view of knowledge, where knowledge is seen as a means to reach the decided goals of the movement. Knowledge means power for the movement and its members. Furthermore, the educational work serves the purpose of completing a defective school education and of enabling the members to participate in literature, art and music.

The development moves towards a more independent position for popular education in relation to the movements. The workers' movement as well as the free church movement have their own study associations. The Workers' Educational Association and The Free Church Educational Association were formed in 1912 and 1947 respectively. This independence is facilitated by contributions from the state, which gives study associations increased economic possibilities, and which also is associated with regulations on indepencence in relation to the member organizations.

Within the workers' movement, however, popular education retains a strong connection with the movement during the 1970's, while this weakens concerning the free church movement. This difference appears to be connected to the workers' movement having more immediate goals for its actions, in contrast to the free church movement. Examples of this are democratization of working life and economic democracy, which demand increased knowledge on the part of the members.

Regarding content of education a gradual change takes place during all

the periods. The change goes from fundamental questions for the movement to subjects such as leisure time occupations and hobby-oriented activities. This change can be associated with the fact that the contrast between the dominating culture and the culture of the movement diminishes. Consequently, the necessity for the movements to bring about radical cultural changes through popular education decreases. Other reasons are that leisure time has been increased by laws about holidays and working time and by a rise in the economic standard.

There are, however, exceptions to this development. As has been mentioned earlier,the actions of the working movement during the 1970's are directed towards, among other things, democratization of working life and economic democracy. This has implications for the movement's popular education. The significant contents emphasize economic, industrial democracy and other trade union questions. The popular education of the workers' movement thus becomes more radical.

The educational methods are characterized by great similarities between the two movements, and by method changes between periods. The concept "self education" which was used in the beginning of the 20th century indicates studies initiated by the people and controlled by the participants.

From the beginning, the movements' libraries have been a focal point for popular education. Study circles were regarded primarily as library associations with the task of making library activities more democratic and effective. The first state support given to the study circle activities arranged by the movements was in the form of a contribution to the study circle library.

A characteristic feature of the study circle as an educational method is that it is comprised of a small group, (10-15 participants) and in general has about ten meetings. Using study circles makes it possible for the participants' search for knowledge to have continuity, and also offers the opportunity for flexibility and possibilities of adjusting the working method. Consequently, during the first research period various different kinds of study circles appeared, such as reading circles, report circles, school circles, correspondence circles and university circles. There were also special youth circles then, as well as co-operation between study circles and lectures.

The development, however, shows one dominating form during the 1970's, i.e. the so-called general study circles. The university circle occurs to a lesser extent, and works approximately in the same way as the general study circle. Visits by experts are to a certain extent replacements for the earlier co-operation between study circles and lectures. The study circle is not, however, as was earlier the case, a part of a greater whole, with the library as the uniting force, but is an independent working form.

According to the thesis, one essential cause for these changes in the working forms is that new principles for state contributions were introduced in 1947. Support to the library was replaced at that time by contributions in the form of fees for study leaders, costs for study material and administration of the study organisations. As a result of these changes, among other things, an unrestricted search for knowledge has gradually been transferred from the library to a more directed learning in relatively extensive study books and according to detailed study plans.

One purpose on the part of the state behind the form of the financial contribution is that the movements' popular education shall form an alternative not only for their own members but also for the whole adult population.

In analogy with the concept "self education", the term "self teacher" is used for the participants in study circles, or similar forms of popular education, in the beginning of the 20th century. Behind the ideas which originally form the basis for study circles there is an assumption of a high degree of homogeneity among the participants. In the thesis some changes during the investigated periods are reported regarding the background of the participants.

One obvious change that has been found concerns the homogeneity of age. During the 1910's and 1930's, popular education is a form of youth upbringing. Afterwards the activities are widened more and more, involving all ages and the dominance for the younger ages ceases. During the 1970's participation is spread relatively evenly across the ages with an emphasis on ages 25-34 years.

Membership in the movement is a background factor which loses significance as recruitment to the study circles broadens. Homogeneity regarding occupation decreases between the periods except in trade union circles within the labour movement.

One can observe certain differences between the participants' educational background.Thus, participants in the workers' movement's language circles during the 1970's are recruited primarily among the lower educated groups, while educational background varies within the aesthetical sector. In the free church movement's study circles, a great number of the participants have upper secondary school or academic education.

The number of women among the participants in study circles increases during and between the three periods. During the 1970's, women are in the majority.

Motives for participating in study circles vary during the 1970's. For younger and well-educated individuals, study circles are a part of the search for general knowledge. On the other hand, groups with older people and a lower level of education, put a larger emphasis on social communications.

Usually study circles have the character of temporary groups. Earlier research has shown that such groups demand a greater responsibility on the part of the leader than more permanent groups.

The result of the study shows that the degree of compatibility between the participants and study circle leaders diminishes between the periods. Background factors connected with this are membership in movements, age, occupation and education. This seems to lead to a wider recruitment of participants as well as leaders. During the 1970's, further differences can be noticed between participants and leaders. Some categories of study circle leaders acquire salary and employment agreements during this decade, which means that circle leadership is professionalized to a certain degree.

The study illustrates how the leader's role has been of essential importance during the whole of the development. For example, during the 1930's correspondence courses were introduced in order to find a

remedy for problems concerned with leadership in the circles. "The problem of study circles has become a problem of leadership." Key people involved in popular education emphasize how important it is for teachers and other study circle leaders, irrespective of educational background, to treat the participants as adults and not as children. "No, our teachers should perform their duties as professors and lecturers at the university's seminars."

The conclusion is that the study circle continues to exist as an educational method, but its characteristics have changed considerably from 1910 to 1980.